



## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

**Date:** May 27, 2015

**Agenda Item #:** 9

**Agenda Item:** Presentation on the Onion Creek Master Plan

**Vote** None due to lack of quorum.

**Sponsors/Department:** Parks and Recreation Department

#### **Summary of Discussion**

Randy Scott from the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department provided an overview of the Onion Creek Metro Park Master Plan with a request to the Committee to recommend the adoption of the plan to City Council. The presentation included background on the Onion Creek Metro Park, the partnership agreement, the public engagement process, the Master Plan components and the Implementation Process.

Originally purchased by the City of Austin in 2000 with 1998 Parkland Acquisition Bonds, the Onion Creek Metro Park is 555-acres of parkland with 180 acres being part of the Onion Creek Greenbelt. During the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session, the Texas Legislature created a Municipal Management District to provide ongoing funding for the Onion Creek Metro Park District through fees charged to homeowners in the adjacent Goodnight Ranch community. In 2014, Austin City Council approved a Consent Agreement between the City of Austin, the Onion Creek Metro Park District and the Austin Goodnight Ranch L.P.

Matt Baumgarten, Sr. Landscape Designer with SWA, described the four workshops that were utilized during the public engagement process and the outcomes regarding the plan. There are a variety of recreation groups that currently use park space and will be taken into consideration in the plan. A site analysis led to the topographic ribbon in which active and passive recreation areas including school sites, the buyout areas, and the current Greenbelt. The analysis also includes a series of ecological restoration sites, pavilions, restrooms, fitness stations, playgrounds and bridges on the south side of the park. Baumgarten described the proposed development on the west side of the park which would include picnic areas, habitat observation areas, and a Community Event Area with an Amphitheater. The north side of the park is proposed for the development of a skate park, a model airplane facility, a disc-golf course, and an outdoor classroom for the adjacent Perez Elementary School.

The next steps of the Onion Creek Master Plan include Phase I Park Development of the engineering and permit drawings, submittal of the Phase I Site Plan, contracting and bidding, and completion of construction of Phase I by 2017 per the Consent Agreement. Cora Wright from the

City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department acknowledged the very successful partnership with Goodnight Ranch and the Austin Parks Foundation in working through this master plan.

- *Board feedback*

Mary Gay Maxwell, Chair of the Environmental Board, was pleased to see the progress of the plan in an area that was recently devastated by flood waters. Jane Rivera, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Board, noted that the Parks and Recreation Board voted unanimously on this plan. Rivera is pleased that a new park is being planned that could sustain the types of events that are currently hosted at Auditorium Shores and Zilker Park.

- *Outreach among the youth*

MPT Tovo inquired on the integration of the youth in the area of the proposed park. Randy Scott and Matt Baumgarten briefly reviewed the community outreach conducted at the various schools within the district. A fair amount of input was included on behalf of the younger generation.

MPT Tovo asked for specific ideas that the youth provided and how those may be included in the plan going forward. Ricardo Soliz from the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department explained that additional input from the students can be included before finalizing the plans for the adventure playground. Soliz also described the excitement of the students and faculty in terms of providing feedback when meeting with Blazier Elementary, Perez Elementary, and Palm Elementary which are the three closest schools in proximity to the park.

- *Use of the quarry*

MPT Tovo asked if there is any potential to utilize the quarry as an adventure playground. Baumgarten noted that an adventure playground is currently included in the plan on the south east side of the site located closest to Blazier Elementary and a skate park is proposed in the north side of the site. MPT Tovo also inquired about the possible activities that may be included in the adventure playground. Baumgarten explained that the general recommendations include nature based adventure play with elements of traditional playgrounds.

- *Extension of Pleasant Valley Road*

CM Pool inquired about the plans of Pleasant Valley Road and whether or not it will bisect the park. Soliz explained that a good portion of the road will sit above the parkland and serve as a bridge and the park road itself will go beneath Pleasant Valley Road. The plan would be very similar to the plan for Zilker and MoPac where it stretches above Barton Springs Road. CM Pool requested to see visual sketches on the proposed plans for Pleasant Valley Road due to some concerns she has regarding the way the road could fragment the park.

Mayra Gepp, a developer of Goodnight Ranch, further explained that City has not yet reached the process of sketches and road design; however, the SWA engineers have taken the design into consideration in terms of the bisection of the park and will not dramatically change the purpose of the park. CM Pool requested a specific presentation of that portion of the 2030 Plan. Baumgarten also explained that there is some flex landscape zone in the active areas in to the south and to the west of Pleasant Valley. The trail connection roads will be raised in certain areas which will not impact any of the park's circulation systems.

CM Pool asked for additional information regarding the width of the road and if Pleasant Valley Road is anticipated to be widened. Randy Scott explained that the planning was conducted as if Pleasant Valley Road was going to be constructed in the future at the existing width of Pleasant Valley Road just north of Onion Creek, which is four lanes wide equal to 120 feet. The road would span the entire flood plain with a fair amount of buffer distance between the road and Onion Creek.

**Public Comments**

None

**Direction**

The Committee would like to have this item sent forward to City Council for approval.

CM Pool requested to see visual sketches on the proposed plans for Pleasant Valley Road due to some concerns she has regarding the way the road could fragment the park along with a specific presentation of that portion of the 2030 Plan.

MPT Tovo concluded by stating that the financing mechanisms used to develop the Onion Creek Metro Park could offer suggested tools on how the City may approach Walter E. Long Park to help with improvements at that park.

In addition, CM Pool concluded by stating that this should be included in a future conversation with Mayor and Council about having a comprehensive development conversation regarding property development east of 183.

**Recommendation**

Both CM Pool and MPT Tovo voiced their support to send this item forward to City Council.